1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
S14 Abipon S14

tested the hard-heartedness of the old women in thus torturing the girls, yet the skill they display in the operation always excited my wonder. For on both cheeks they form all sorts of figures with wondrous proportion, variety, and equality of the lines, with the aid of no other instrument than thorns of various sizes. Every Abiponian woman you see has a different pattern on her face. Those that are most painted and pricked you may know to be of high rank and noble birth, and if you meet a woman with but three or four black lines on her face, you may be quite certain she is either a captive, or of low birth. When Christian discipline was firmly established in the Abiponian colonies, this vile custom was by our efforts abolished, and the women now retain their natural appearance.

1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1750) 1822
514 Abipon 514

along with many others. Of what death, or in what place Caëperiahachin died, I am still ignorant.

The liberty of wandering at will, the abundant supply of food and clothing, the multitude of horses, the power of being as idle and profligate as they chose, and the completest impunity, where neither law nor censure is to be apprehended, bind the Spanish captives to the Abipones with so sweet a chain, that they prefer their captivity to freedom, forgetful of *their relations and their country, where they* know that they must live in obedience to the laws, and labour daily, unless they choose to endure stripes and hunger. I have known captives of so bad a disposition that their masters were glad to get rid of them without ransom. In many of the captives you would look in vain for the least trace of a Christian, or even of a man. Very few of the Abipones have many wives at a time, though they account polygamy lawful; the captives, seldom content with one, marry as many Spanish or Indian captives as they can. For the Abiponian women scorn to marry either Spaniards, or Indians of any other nation, unless, by the splendour of their achievements, namely, slaughters and rapine, they be reputed Abipones in nobility. The men too, accounting themselves

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

*192 551 768 ceased are presently abolished. During the first years that I spent amongst the Abipones, it was usual to say *Hegmalkam kahamátek?* When will there be a slaughtering of oxen? On account of the death of some Abipon, the word *kahamátek* was interdicted, and, in its stead, they were all commanded, by the voice of a cryer, to say, *Hegmalkam négerkatà?* The word *nihirenak*, a tiger, was exchanged for *apañigehak; peûe*, a crocodile, for *kaeprhak*, and *Kaáma*, Spaniards, for *Rikil*, because these words bore some resemblance to the names of Abipones lately deceased. Hence it is that our vocabularies are so full of blots, occasioned by our having such frequent occasion to obliterate interdicted words, and insert new ones. Add 198 to this another thing which increases the diffi- 565 culty of learning the language of the Abipones. [554] Persons promoted to the rank of nobles are called *Hëcheri*, and *Neleñeycatè*, and are distinguished from the common people even by their language. They generally use the same words, [*192] but so transformed by the interposition, or addition of other letters, that they appear to belong to a different language. The names of men *193 belonging to this class, end in *In;* those of the 198 women, who also partake of these honours, in 565 *En*. These syllables you must add even to *192 substantives and verbs in talking with them.

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

192* 193* 198 565

The sentence, This horse belongs to Captain Debayakaikin, would be rendered by an Abipon, speaking the vulgar tongue, in this manner: *Encha ahĕpegak Debayakaikin lela.* But in the language of the Hëcheri you must say, *Debayakaikin lilin.* They salute a plebeian with *Là nauichi?* Art thou come? to which he replies *Là ñauè*, I am come. If a noble person is addressed, he must be saluted in these words: *Là náuirin*, Art thou come? and he, with much importance, and pompous modulation of his voice, will reply, *Là ñauerinkie*, I am come. Moreover, they have some words peculiar to themselves, by which they supersede those in general use. Thus, the common people call a mother, *Latè*, the nobles, *Lichiá.* The former call a son *Laètaŕat*, the latter *Illalèk*, not to mention other instances. Both in the explanation of religion, and in common conversation, we chose to use the vulgar tongue, because it was understood by all. [576]

192* 197

I have said that there are three kinds of Abipones, the *Riikahes*, the *Nakaikétergehes*, and the *Yaaukanigas.* All of them, however, speak the same language; all understand each other, and are understood. Yet each of these classes has some words peculiar to itself. The Riikahes call gnats *ayte;* the Nakaiketergehes *apatáye.* Both names are extremely suitable to gnats, for

1 Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514
VENEZUELAN INDIANS 554

valour is initiated into warlike honours with ceremonies which I shall presently describe.

The names of the Abipones who are not distinguished by military rank, end in various letters; but when, on account of their services in war, they are admitted into the rank of the nobles, they drop the name which they bore in youth, and receive another which always terminates in the syllable *In*. They who are solemnly inaugurated, according to the custom of their ancestors, are called *Höcheri*, and have a dialect of their own; for though they use the common words, yet, by insertion and addition of various syllables, they transform and obscure them in such a manner that they can hardly be understood. I shall now briefly describe the rites by which they are promoted to this dignity. When, by the arbitration of the rest, such an honour has been decreed to any one, they make a previous trial of his fortitude, by an experiment common to all. A black bead being placed upon his tongue, he is ordered to sit down at home for three days, and during that time to abstain from speaking, eating, and drinking. This is indeed a harsh law, but it appears mild in comparison with the torments endured by certain Indians at the river Orinoco, when candidates for military honours. They are laid on a hurdle, beneath which are placed burning

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4
VENEZUELAN INDIANS

coals, and, that the heat and smoke may be the more intolerable, the poor wretches are completely overwhelmed with palm leaves. They anoint the whole of the body of others with honey, tie them to a tree, and expose them to the stings of bees, wasps, drones, and hornets. But let me now return to the Abipon who is fasting and keeping silence at home. On the evening preceding this military function all the women flock to the threshold of his tent. Pulling off their clothes from the shoulder to the middle, and dishevelling their hair, they stand in a long row, and with confused shouts, accompanied with the sound of gourds, and with the continual agitation of their arms and legs, lament for the ancestors of him, who is, next day, to be adorned with a military dignity. These lamentations continue till it is dark. As soon as morning dawns, our candidate, elegantly dressed in the fashion of his nation, and holding a spear in his hand, leaps upon a horse laden with feathers, small bells, and trappings, and gallops northward, followed by a great troop of Abipones. Presently, returning with equal speed, he approaches the tent, where sits an old female juggler, the priestess of the ceremonies, who is afterwards to inaugurate the candidate with solemn rites. Some woman of noble birth officiously holds his spear and the bridles of his

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

horse, while he dismounts, the rest of the matrons continuing to strike their lips, and applaud; when the candidate listens to a short address from the old woman seated on a hide, with as much veneration as if it was an oracle from a Delphic tripod. Then mounting fresh horses, he rides out in the same manner as before, first to the South, then to the East, and then to the West, and after each journey alights at the same tent, where that Pythian, like a female Apollo, pours forth her eloquence. The four excursions being performed, and the horses dismissed, they all betake themselves to that sacred tent, to witness the usual ceremony of the inauguration. This ceremony consists of three things: first the hair of the candidate is shaven by an old woman, so that from the forehead to the back part of the head she leaves a baldness or streak, three inches wide, which they call *Nalemŕa*. The business of the hair being finished, the old woman pronounces a panegyric, setting forth the noble actions of the candidate, his warlike disposition, knowledge of arms and horses, intrepidity in difficulties, the enemies that he has slaughtered, the spoils that he has taken, the military fame of his ancestors, and so on; in order that he may appear, on many accounts, worthy to be declared

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
814 Abipon 814

a captain and a noble warrior, and to enjoy the rights and privileges of the Höcheri. His new name is immediately promulgated, and festively pronounced by a band of women striking their lips with their hands. The male spectators do not like dry ceremonies to be protracted to a great length, but joyfully fly to skins full of honeyed liquor, and conclude the business with a famous drinking-match.

It is remarkable that many of the women arrive at this degree of honour, and nobility, enjoy the privileges of the Höcheri, and use their dialect. The names of these females end in *En*, as those of the men in *In*. What circumstances entitle women of low birth to this degree of honour, I do not know, but it appears to me most probable that the merits of their parents, husbands, or brothers, not age, or beauty, bestow this prerogative upon females. I have often heard very young women conversing in the language of the nobles, and matrons remarkable for years and wrinkles speaking the vulgar tongue.

The Abipones think it a sin to utter their own name. When either of them knocked by night at my door, though I asked him a hundred times, "Who are you?" he would answer nothing but, "It is I." Unknown per-